

Claims

1. A control system for controlling a physical device including a computer, a controlled device, and a micro-controller having input means and output means, the controller including micro-controller software, wherein the micro-controller software is programmed to generate a hypertext transfer protocol request (http) upon receipt of an input signal by the micro-controller input means, which request is transmitted to the computer via the output means, wherein the transmission of data from the device to the computer is performed by the micro-controller, and wherein the micro-controlled software is programmed to receive text data contained in a web page, the said data including control information, and upon receipt of such data the micro-controller software identifies the control information contained in the web page, and allows a control signal to be sent from the computer to the controlled device.
2. A control system according to Claim 1, wherein the text data contained in the web page is written in HyperText Markup Language (HTML).
3. A control system according to Claim 1, wherein the text date contained in the web page is written in the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII).
4. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the controlled device receives a control signal via the micro-controller, the control signal causing the controlled device to perform an operation dependent on the nature of the information carried by the control signal.
5. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the computer receives the http requests generated by the micro-controller and generates an output signal contained within text data in a web page for transmission to the micro-controller, and wherein on receipt of the said output signal the micro-controller performs a control operation on the controlled device.
6. A control system according to preceding claim, wherein the micro-controller includes a filter, the filter allowing passage of control information contained within the text data, and preventing passage of other data contained within the text data.
7. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the filter is a text parser.

8. A control system according to Claim 7, wherein the text parser is an HTML parser.
9. A control system according to any preceding claim, further including a database.
10. A control system according to Claim 9, wherein the system compares information associated with an http request from the micro-controller with information stored on the database, and wherein if the comparison meets a criteria the computer generates a control signal for controlling the device, and if the comparison does not meet a criteria the computer does not generate a control signal for controlling the device.
11. A control system according to Claim 9, wherein events that occur in the system are recorded in the database.
12. A control system according to Claim 11, wherein http requests generated by the micro-controller software are recorded in the database.
13. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the said micro-controller is part of the said computer.
14. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the controlled device is a machine tool.
15. A control system according to Claim 14 when dependent on Claim 9, wherein the machine tool sends a signal to the micro-controller via the input means requesting machining instructions, and wherein the micro-controller generates an http request requesting the machining instructions from the computer, and the computer interrogates the database for machining instructions for the said machine tool, and wherein if instructions for the said machine tool are located on the database, the said instructions are transmitted via the computer to the micro-controller with a control signal contained in a web page commanding the micro-controller to allow passage of the said instructions to the said machine tool.
16. A control system according to Claim 14 or 15, wherein the machine tool sends a signal to the micro-controller via the input means identifying the said machine tool, and wherein the micro-

controller generates an http request to the computer requesting processing information unique to the said machine tool, and wherein the said unique processing information is applied to instructions transmitted to the said machine tool.

17. A control system according to any of Claims 1 to 13, wherein the controlled device is a printer, or a photocopier, or a fax machine, or an access barrier.
18. A control system according to Claim 17, wherein the micro-controller input means is a swipe card reader, and wherein personally identified information related to the controlled device is stored on the computer, and when a swipe card is passed through the swipe card reader an http request including the personal identity of the card holder is sent to the computer, and wherein the said personally identified information held on the computer having a personal identity matching the personal identity transmitted in the http request is transmitted to the micro-controller, and wherein the micro-controller transmits information release data to the computer which transmits the information to the controlled device via the micro-controller.
19. A control system according to Claim 18, wherein the system further comprises an inter-active display, and wherein information held on the computer having a personal identity matching the personal identity transmitted in the http request are displayed on the inter-active display.
20. A control system according to Claim 19, wherein the information displayed on the inter-active display may be manually selected using the inter-active display.
21. A control system according to Claim 19 or 20, wherein the personally identified information comprises print jobs, or photocopier jobs, or fax jobs, or access permissions.
22. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the data contained in the text of the web page transmitted to the computer in response to an http request is marked.
23. A control system according to Claim 22, wherein marking data consists of tabulating said data, or placing said data between computer readable markers.
24. A control system according to any preceding claim, wherein the computer is a server.

25. A control system according to Claim 24, wherein the server is an Internet server, or is a network server.
26. A micro-controller suitable for use in a control system according to any preceding claim.
27. A computer program comprising computer program instructions which, when loaded into the micro-controller constitute the micro-controller software of the control system of any of Claims 1 to 25.
28. A method of controlling a physical device using a control system according to any of Claims 1 to 25, comprising the following steps:
 - i) the micro-controller software generates an http request upon receipt of an input signal by the micro-controller input means;
 - ii) transmitting data from the device to the computer via the micro-controller;
 - iii) the micro-controller software receives a web page containing text data and identifies control information contained in the text data; and
 - iv) enabling a control signal to be sent from the computer to the controlled device.
29. A control system substantially as described with reference to, and as shown in the drawings.